

BRASSWORD-A Holophrastic Method for Teaching

Young Brass Players

presented by

Scott C. Watson, Professor of Tuba- Euphonium, School of Music, University of Kansas, USA, Buffet-Crampon Artist-Clinician.

Holophrastic language- Words or phrases that are rich in meaning. The *Brassword Method* can be used by educators to teach brass students, by repetition, to associate vital precepts of playing and action with its words and slogans. This allows brass players to play naturally and with confidence. Music-making can then become organic within their experience.

I. WIND-The Lifeforce of Brass

Vital Air Technique: The Magic Syllable of the Inward WHOH. This syllable & holophrastic concept should be used for EACH & EVERY BREATH.

The "WH" of the syllable is the impetus of the air. "WH" is pronounced as in the words "whisper" or "what." The "OH" opens the throat. Presto! An automatic, full, and tensionless breath.

HOW TO TAKE A PROPER BREATH: To take a full breath using this magical syllable, the player keeps the top lip on the mouthpiece, so it sets the embouchure. Dropping the jaw, we inhale using the "Inward WHOH".

Vital Air Philosophy: EVERY BREATH is a FULL BREATH.

This philosophy is essential for we use full breaths for support. Even if we are to play one note *pianissimo*, it requires a full breath!

Our Three Core Air Exercises.

These should be done daily either individually, as a section, or as a full wind band.

"Air Molecules Thru the Skin"

PURPOSE: To make the body a great receptacle for air while obtaining a physical realization of a full breath.

EXERCISE: Turn the back of your hand toward you. Suck air with your hand over your mouth for 3 seconds then quickly release. Repeat 3 times.

Variation: "The Baffle" Do the same, but this time quickly release & return the hand over the mouth till you are full. Repeat 3 times.

USED: Individually, as a section, or as an entire brass section.

FREQUENCY: Daily

"The 10 Count"

PURPOSE: To ingrain the use of the "Inward WHOH", creating full, tensionless breaths.

EXERCISE: Breathe 10 Counts in, 10 counts out, using the *Inward Whoh* on every breath. Then 8 in/ 8 out, 6 in/ 6 out, 4 in/ 4 out, 2 in/ 2 out. When reaching 1 in/ 1 out, "groove" on the syllable for approx. 30 seconds. Strive for as little sound as possible.

Too much sound means that there is tension in the throat. **USED:** Individually, as a section, or as an entire brass section. **FREQUENCY:** Daily

- **The "Sizzle"**

PURPOSE: To activate the air stream and instill the habit of blowing wind.

EXERCISE: Put the tongue against the teeth to create resistance (air resistance training) which results in a hissing sound. Breathe 4 counts in, then attempt to blow out all the air in only 4 counts. You won't be able to. Repeat 3-5 times.

USED: Individually, as a section, or as an entire brass section.

FREQUENCY: Daily

ANOTHER HELPFUL AIR TECHNIQUE EXERCISE THROWN IN FOR FREE!

- **"The Quick Count"**

PURPOSE: To learn to take quick breaths without tension using the "Inward WHOH".

EXERCISE: Set metronome at quarter =60 in 4/4 time.

Take breath on the half-note-Take breath on the quarter note -Take breath on the 8th note. (+ after 4) Take breath on the 8th note triplet (last note of the triplet)-Take breath on the last 16th note. Increase the speed of the tempo as students improve. *Stress that there be no tension in the breath!*

USED: Individually, as a section, or as an entire brass section/full wind band.

FREQUENCY: Daily for 6 sessions -then once a week

More Vital Air Techniques:

FACT: Conical brass instruments (Cornet, Horn, Euphonium, Tuba,) require three *Styles of Air*.

Upper Register: The upper register of any conical instrument acoustically demands a more intensified air stream. Holophrastic Slogan: **"LASER AIR"** (Pressurized air)

Middle Register: An air stream under little pressure:
Holophrastic Slogan: "FOG THE MIRROR AIR"

Lower Register: The lower register demands a specialized style of air, which is the antithesis of the upper register's style of air. Here we use a large volume of air under low pressure (relaxed air & body) which results in a faster flow rate under little or no tension. The instrument acoustically demands (Holophrastic Slogan) "BIG RIVER AIR."

!! Cylindrical instruments (Trumpet & Trombone) use a more focused air stream in keeping with the fact that cylindrical instruments acoustically provide back pressure. Overall, their air style should be slightly more focused at all times. These instruments also use the "LASER AIR" style of air in their upper registers, being even more focused than what is used in their middle and lower registers.

Vital Air Concept: (Dynamics)

Dynamics are achieved by the *speed* of the air.

Holophrastic Slogan: Loud is *fast air*-Soft is *slow air*.

Vital Air Technique: Soft & Loud Playing

Soft playing also demands *slow, intensified air*. **Holophrastic Slogan:** "Intense Air!"

Intensified air comes from air support (higher interior air pressure) through a full breath.

Suggested Soft Dynamic Concept Exercises:

Pencil across the tabletop:

*Practice this slow intensified air concept by setting a round pencil on a table top or even surface. Take a full breath and blow **slow, intensified air** at the pencil as you try to keep the speed of the pencil's roll across the table constant.*

1/2 valve glissandi on the instrument

Using any scale played softly in whole notes at a slow tempo, Slowly half-valve each note trying for an even smear between the notes. !Trombonists will need to only use half steps in which the two slide positions are adjacent. For example 1st to 2nd; or 4th to 3rd.

Playing at louder dynamics is essentially becoming comfortable with the increased demand faster air puts on the musculature of the embouchure. The brass player must learn to simply speed up their air versus adding tension in the embouchure or the body. This is very much about creating a "comfort zone" when playing at loud dynamics.

Embouchure Function

Brass performers are singers that sing through their instruments by vibration.

II. A good brass embouchure has:

1. Firm corners that are slightly down to support vibration, function, and to shape the aperture correctly.
2. A flat jaw that is firm but not tight.
3. An oval shaped aperture. (Due to firm corners that are slightly down)
4. Lips that are slightly pursed. (NOT a pucker.)
5. Copious amounts of air flowing across the lips!

Vital Embouchure Concept: The Magic of FISH FACE

Straws and Teaching the FISH FACE Concept of Embouchure Set.

Holophrastic Slogan:

The LOWER the NOTE, The **BIGGER** the FISH.

THE HIGHER the NOTE, The **SMALLER** the FISH.

Vital Embouchure Fact: The **JAW** Changes the **Size**. It is the jaw that changes the size of our embouchure.

Great Holophrastic Concept: Let Your Jaw Follow the Notes on the Page. The Notes Go Up-the Jaw Goes Up/ The Notes Go Down- the Jaw Goes Down.

THE ~~FATAL~~ DISEASE OF "MUSHY CHOPS" *Mushy Chops*-an embouchure that is not supported by firm corners!

Vital Embouchure Concept-Size Ratio

The embouchure *gets larger as we descend, and smaller as we ascend.*

The Ratio of Embouchure Size to Octave is :

1. For every octave we descend, the embouchure is *twice (2x) as large*.
2. For every octave we ascend, the embouchure is *half the size*.

This concept allows the player to have a mental size-regulator that governs our physical movement of the jaw to make the proper changes in embouchure size.

SOOOO...**The SIZE changes, but the SHAPE stays the same!**

Using Mouthpiece Buzzing to Develop Brass Embouchures Buzzing With Glissandi-

The Great Accelerator
Buzz Starter Exercise: Sirens

The Importance of the A.O. Joint in Brass Embouchure Function

Holophrastic Slogan for the A.O. Joint: 'BE A BOBBLE-HEAD!'

Let the neck and shoulders be loose like a bobble-head doll, allowing the A.O. Joint to do its job.

III. SOUND AND ARTICULATION [Great sound has five essential components.](#)

1. Fuel (Wind)
2. Embouchure Shape (oval aperture shape) through the FISH FACE concept.
3. Embouchure Support (Firm Corners)
4. Proper embouchure size for the pitch being created.
5. Articulation (Articulation *is* indeed part of *sound*)

Here are some suggested educational solo repertoire recordings for brass:

Stepping Stones Series for Brass, Potenza Records (avail. from JustforBrass.com)
Stepping Stones for Horn, Vol. 1 & 2 *Stepping Stones for Trombone* *Stepping Stones for Euphonium* *Stepping Stones for Tuba*, Vol. 1 & 2
Solo Pro Series: *Contest Music for Trumpet*, John Ellis, Summit Records

Vital Sound Techniques: Basic Articulation-The Syllable Method

Vital Fact: *The Tongue Releases the Air.*

[Not the other way around! The tongue is the switch that allows the lips to vibrate by releasing the air.](#)

WHY THE SYLLABLE METHOD:

The use of a syllables is tapping into our conditioned use of them in language. Use of the "O" and "A(H)" vowels, which being in the back of the throat, are open and great for sound. We use the "O" to open the throat so that air quantity is not sacrificed when we tongue.

The language center in the brain is also where pitch is conceived, so syllables are natural for the brass player to use. Using syllables combines pitch, sound concept, and articulation from the same center of brain activity.

Vital Articulation Knowledge

The tongue is not a single muscle' but a collection of smaller muscles in the front and back that work with each other!

Vital Articulation Fact: "T's & "D's

Vital Articulation Concept: The Tongue Slices the Air.

SYLLABLE LIST PER INSTRUMENT FOR ALL THREE REGISTERS

INSTRUMENT	MIDDLE REGISTER	LOW REGISTER	HIGH REGISTER
TRUMPET/CORNET	TAH	TU OR TÄH	TAH
HORN	TOH or TU	TOH or DOH	TAH
TROMBONE	TAH	DAH	TAH
EUPHONIUM	TOH	DOH	TOH
TUBA	DOH	DOH	TOH

BRASSWORD can be purchased at: www.brassword.net **USE**
Discount Code: MIDWESTFACE



Scott C. Watson is Professor of Tuba-Euphonium at the School of Music of the University of Kansas, an association that dates back to 1979. He is the author of *Brassword: A Holophrastic Method for Teaching Young Brass Players*, published by Fishface Press. He is a co-author with his dear friend Dr. Jerry Young of the upcoming GIA publication *A Practical Guide to Applied Teaching in Higher Education*. Scott's solo efforts can be heard on "Thoughts of a Cow" Solo CD and the educational recordings "Stepping Stones for Tuba", Volumes I & II on Potenza Records. He was elected and served as President of the International Tuba Euphonium Association from 1999-2001, and currently serves on the Association's Advisory Board.

Scott has been both Principal Eb and BBb Tuba of the acclaimed Fountain City Brass Band of Kansas City, the most successful brass band in American history, having won eight North American titles, seven U.S. Open titles, and their historic Scottish Open win in 2009. He is also the inaugural Music and Artistic Director of the Free State Brass Band. In 2018 he served as Principal Tuba of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra in Australia as part of its MSO Ambassador Program. While there, he taught at the Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne, Victoria School of the Arts, as well as being Principal Eb tuba of the Glenferrie (Kew) Brass Band. Scott is a member of the Infinity Brass Quintet of the Martha's Vineyard Chamber Music Festival and the Kansas City Brassworks. Along with friend Winston Morris, he founded the tuba-euphonium chamber orchestra Symphonia that recorded three groundbreaking albums on Mark Records. Scott has been tubist in his career with such ensembles as the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Brevard Music Center Orchestra, and the Crested Butte Music Festival Orchestra, along with regular performances with the Kansas City Symphony. He has concertized all over the world including Russia, China, Poland, Germany, France, Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom, France, and Australia. As a conductor he has worked with such groups as the Capital City Brass Band, the Glenferrie (Kew) Brass Band, the Mansfield University Brass Band, the KU Brass Ensemble, the International All-Star College

Tuba Ensemble, The International All-Star High School Tuba Ensemble, and the Thunder All-Star Tuba Euphonium Ensemble, all on prestigious conferences and/or concert series. Loving to make music with friends, Scott joined forces in 2018 with Kansas City Symphony Orchestra President Frank Byrne and Educational Director Stephanie Brimhall to conduct a 900 + tuba-euphonium players to set a new Guinness World Record for the largest like-instrument ensemble ever, as part of the symphony's annual Tuba Christmas concerts. He serves as the resident conductor of the KC Tuba Christmas concerts.

As a teacher, his legions of former students can be found throughout orchestras, major military service bands, in college-university positions, and acclaimed public school music programs across the United States. Scott is on the faculty each summer at the North American Brass Band Summer School in Halifax, Nova Scotia (Canada).

Scott Watson is a proud Artist-Clinician for Besson Tubas through Buffet-Crampon. He is often found presenting clinics and residencies as a pedagogue, educator, and conductor in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, and Australia.



